

**CENTERING  
BLACK  
FAMILIES  
AND  
JUSTICE-  
FOCUSED  
EDUCATORS  
DURING  
PANDEMIC  
REMOTE  
SCHOOLING**  
(Spring - Fall 2020)

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FEBRUARY 2021



## ABOUT THE PARTNERING FOR RACIAL EQUITY RPP PROJECT

Since 2015, the University of Washington (UW), Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and Seattle Education Association (SEA) have collaborated in the Partnering for Racial Equity Research-Practice Partnership (RPP). With support from the Spencer Foundation, the partnership was among the first in the nation to collectively engage in racial equity-centered inquiry to drive systemic change. The RPP's initial efforts focused on developing and supporting Racial Equity Teams (RETs) across the district. The RPP designed and conducted a survey and four case studies to understand the work of the teams, the organizational conditions for racial equity work, and culturally responsive practices in the district.<sup>1</sup> We identified key shifts in schools with RETs from the dominant race-evasive culture of schools towards the development of crucial foundational racial literacies, and the findings informed subsequent RET supports and highlighted the need to teams within an integrated system of racial equity work across the district. The RPP has recently expanded its focus to support racial equity in the Central Office's community engagement and data collection processes through efforts to center Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) voices and concerns, particularly Black students and families, across departments and decision-making. Special thanks to Emijah Smith (Colorful Communities), Hodan Mohamed, and Christine Tang (Families of Color Seattle) for their leadership in these efforts.

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*“This is a prime opportunity to create innovative safe and brave spaces for ALL children but specifically scholars of color.”*

*-Community member from State of the Black Student Genius Event*

## **THE NEED FOR DATA FROM BIPOC FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

The sudden shuttering of the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 exacerbated racial inequities in education. Remote learning has illuminated the disparate impact of the pandemic on Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) families – at the same time, some families have experienced a reprieve from the racism they experienced in schools.<sup>2</sup> Both across the country and in Seattle specifically, a number of Black parents have noted happier and less stressed children schooling from home with fewer racial microaggressions and negative interactions with educators and administrators.<sup>3,4</sup> These families have had to contend with anti-Black racism in schools for long before the pandemic, but typical approaches to collecting data in districts often miss those experiences while privileging the voices of white parents, who tend to respond to surveys at higher rates<sup>5</sup> and wield disproportionate influence on systemic decision-making.<sup>6–8</sup>

Soon after schools shifted to remote instruction, Seattle Public Schools sought to hear from families about their experiences and get input to inform decisions for reopening. The district sent an electronic survey about remote learning in May 2020 and again in the fall to all families.<sup>9,10</sup> While an important starting point, the response rates did not reflect SPS demographics in either survey; respondents were disproportionately white and from higher-income schools. In the May 2020 survey, 66% of the respondents were white families (and made up 47% of the district’s overall population), while Black families were only 4% of the survey respondents (Black families overall comprise 14% of the district’s population). The voices of Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native, Asian, and Pacific Islander families were underrepresented in both sets of survey data ([see Appendix A](#)). Although conventional approaches to collecting data from BIPOC families often yield such results, the pandemic has reinforced the urgency of new approaches, particularly with regard to the insights and experiences of Black families impacted by educational injustices.

## **GATHERING CRUCIAL INSIGHTS FROM BLACK FAMILIES AND JUSTICE-FOCUSED EDUCATORS**

The purpose of this report is to share aspects of the experiences and priorities of Black families — including their culturally-affirming practices — and of educators to enable SPS to improve instruction, support, and equity for students and families during remote learning (and beyond). Drawing on the district’s [Targeted Universalism strategy](#) to address oppressive systems, the Partnering for Racial Equity Research Practice Partnership (RPP) supported data collection and

synthesis about the priorities and needs of Black and other families of color to complement the district's prior data collection and contribute to the district's strategic goals of fostering an equitable education system for every student. Established in 2015, RPP is a partnership of the University of Washington (UW), Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and Seattle Education Association (SEA) to support inquiry and change towards systemic racial equity.

Activities with three different groups of Black families and communities are included in this report. These three groups included multigenerational African American descendants of enslaved Africans with sons in SPS; Somali refugee and immigrant families with children in 19 SPS schools; and Black SPS youth, families and community leaders from across the district. During the summer of 2020, the RPP sought the perspectives from Black families and communities about their experiences of remote learning in the spring. The RPP partnered with Families of Color-Seattle (FOCS) to conduct a focus group with multigenerational Black/African American families with sons who attend SPS to learn from their experiences (see Appendix B). SPS parent and Somali community leader, Hodan Mohamed, drew on an existing electronic network of Somali families (via WhatsApp) and conducted a series of focus groups via the phone with 45 Somali families from 19 different schools in the district. Additionally, Emijah Smith, parent and community leader with Colorful Communities, hosted and facilitated two State of the Black Student Genius community meetings in April 2020 and July 2020. The spring forum was attended by nearly 100 participants, and the July event (which primarily informed this report) included approximately 65 Black youth, families, and community leaders, including local Black educators, community organizers, faith-based leaders, and other organizational leaders. SPS superintendent, Denise Juneau and SPS leadership were invited to both meetings. The meetings started with community members sharing their experiences through stories and aimed to engage the Black community with the superintendent, support the academic learning of Black students, and provide solutions and access to resources for Black students and families. These meetings become a model for Black community meetings that other districts in the region sought to learn from.

While not synthesized in this report, a number of other SPS departments and initiatives have also collected data from Black students and families during this time period, including the African American Male Achievement (AAMA) Initiative, the Special Education department, community engagement, and others. In tandem with this report, these efforts are an important step in centering Black excellence, experiences and voice to realize justice in SPS education.

During the same time period, the partnership also surveyed educators who are part of the SPS Culturally Responsive Leadership Cadre to learn about their practices and priorities in providing culturally responsive instruction this past spring (see Appendix C). This report also refers to

data from the annual Professional Growth and Evaluation Supports (PGES) survey for all certificated SPS teachers ([Appendix D](#)). The 2019-2020 PGES survey, administered in June 2020, received 1,716 responses out of the 3,090 total certificated teachers in the district to questions about their culturally responsive teaching practices during the 2019-20 school year (44% of the response rate on this question). The respondents represented the demographics of the certificated SPS teacher population in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and average years of teaching experience.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, 933 educators responded to the open-ended question that inquired about how they made their practice culturally responsive in remote learning and the shifts they made during the pandemic.

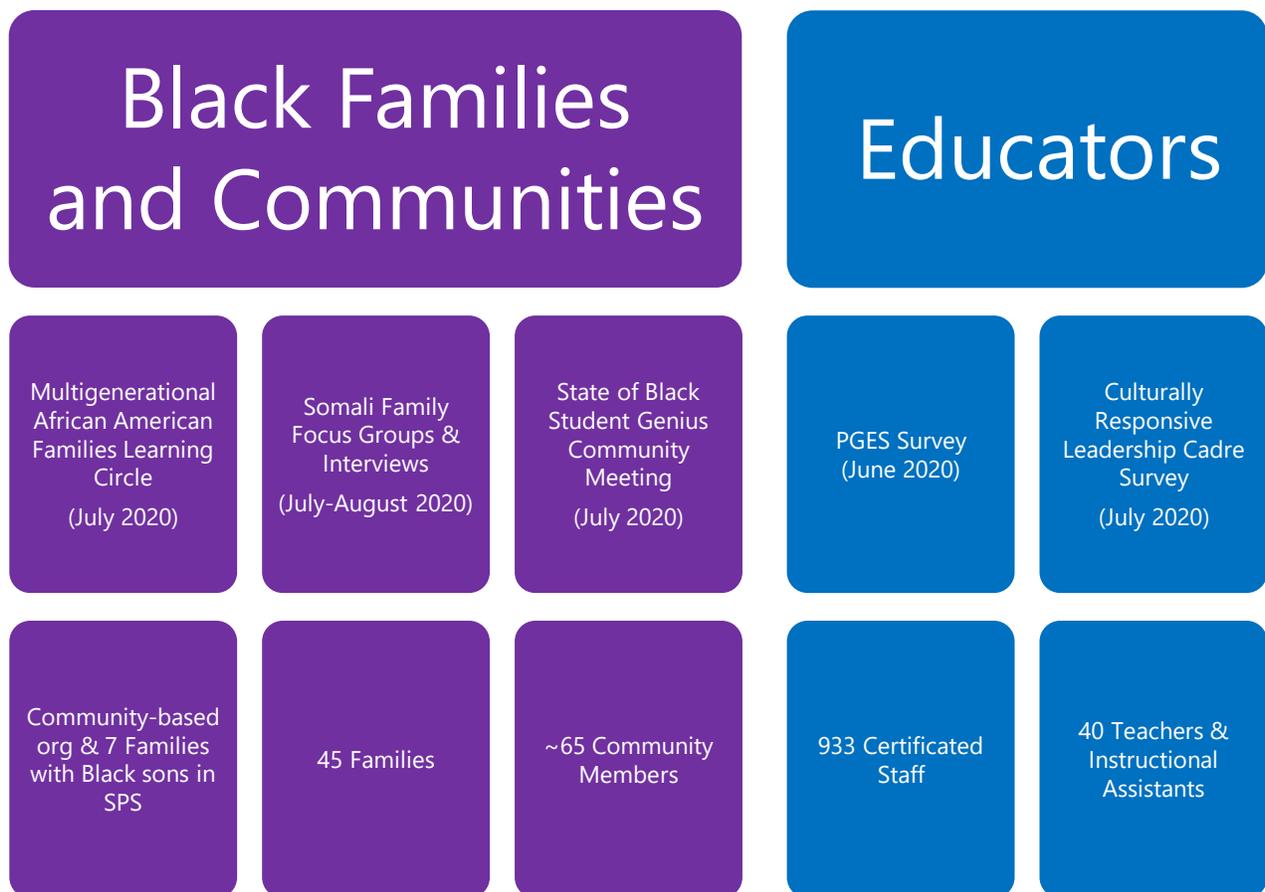


Figure 1: Data Sources and Respondents

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the abrupt shift to remote learning was extremely challenging for Black families in SPS. The difficulties heightened the ongoing racial inequities families already experienced with the school system and necessitated increased home supports. By fall, most white students and families reported that they felt better about remote learning, but Black students and families across grade levels who responded to the district survey indicated that their overall experiences with remote learning had *not* improved.<sup>10</sup> Many educators also felt unprepared to make the sudden transition to remote instruction -- survey results from May indicated that less than 42% of educators felt they understood how to effectively deliver remote instruction that advanced student learning.<sup>9</sup> As schools reopen, the insights and learning of families, communities and educators during this time offer ways forward that refuse a return to an inequitable "normal." We first highlight findings specific to families and communities, followed by shared findings amongst families, communities, and educators (see Figure 1 above for data sources), then findings specific to educators (see Figure 2). We then describe how the collected data informed ongoing district efforts. Finally, we recommend next steps based on findings from the efforts outlined in this report.



Figure 2: Findings for Black Families & Community as well as Educators  
 \*Please note themes are numbered in the order they are described, not in order of priority.

The report concludes with a set of detailed recommendations on pages [17-18](#):

- Prioritize and invest resources that address the specific concerns, insights, and expertise of Black families and communities, with a particular focus on student safety and wellbeing.
- Innovate with community-specific data collection methods and data use to advance racial equity across the district.
- Resource and build from home and community learning to address Black student interests/needs and foster more culturally responsive instruction.
- Build alignment and collaboration across initiatives and departments to share BIPOC student and family experiential data.
- Leverage BIPOC district and community expertise to inform district-level decision-making.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO BLACK FAMILIES AND BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS

#### 1. Black families and community leaders shared deep frustration with ongoing racial inequities in schools that were heightened by remote learning during the pandemic.

African American families reported that navigating working full-time while managing the unique needs of their children was extremely challenging. One family shared that they struggled to secure devices for their children and had to seek support from their child's principal directly. Some Somali families reported struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., rent, groceries) and did not have adequate space or access to high-quality devices and supplies such as desks and chairs for remote instruction. One Somali single mom shared: "*[I] have to choose to put food on the table or be a teacher at home with my kids.*" 61% of Black or African American families who responded to the SPS remote learning survey in the spring reported concerns about their children's learning.

African American families shared that they **experienced longstanding and ongoing racialized tension** with educators in their schools, and this was exacerbated by the dual pandemics (of COVID-19 and racism), compounding their frustrations with the school system. Black families were constantly dealing with low expectations and racialized assumptions about their sons and other children. Families expressed ongoing frustration with teachers and administrators when advocating for their child's needs. One grandmother shared:

*They [educators] don't want to learn what's going on with the child. My grandson had experienced several losses in his life ... and I would let them know this. But in the back of their mind, "Oh, this child has a behavior issue..." And I just think we need to be more educated on our kids of color.*

Somali families reported that their children were **safer at home and happier** because they did not have to experience the day-to-day racial trauma in schools. One family shared, *"My babies are laughing and smiling."* Another Somali family shared,

*I feel my child is safer at home. A lot of the stress and weight came off my shoulders. Now I know my son is safe at home. He was in the office everyday. Now he is at home, safe.*

Another family also shared that prior to the pandemic, the school called them often to report negative incidents of their child, and it was stressful. They were worried about how their child was being treated by school staff. Now they are more relaxed.

One family shared feeling exhausted by advocating for their son as well as the anger and trauma they experienced from educators who held low expectations of him. At the State of the Black Student Genius event, one Black parent and community leader expressed concerns between the Black community and the school district: *"we talked about the gap in connecting with the [Black] community. COVID opened up the lid to the real true inequities."* Community members expressed that the district was not responding to the Black communities' needs and that a covenant needed to be established between the community and SPS.

## **2. Black families and Black community leaders expressed complex concerns about safety as they consider schools reopening.**

Although African American families expressed that they would like their children to return to school, they also acknowledged the **disproportionate impact** of COVID-19 on Black communities. One family shared that the pandemic has "laid bare" the racial disparities across Black and brown communities, specifically in healthcare and unemployment, thus when considering the safety of their children returning to school, they must also navigate these additional layers of complexities. Black community leaders also expressed discomfort with students returning to school because of the pandemic's disproportionate economic and health impacts on the Black community. When families were asked about their comfort level in sending their children back to school, a majority of Somali families shared that they were uncomfortable. One Somali mother reported **mistrust** of the schools, *"my child was not safe before."* She shared that she did not trust that the professionals at the school would take care of her child, especially with COVID-19. One African American family shared:

*When I first started to hear about COVID back in December, January, understanding that it was only a matter of time before it hit our shores, I knew that our community was going to be impacted based on the fact that when these kinds of things happen, we are the community that is the most impacted. And so all of this gives me pause and concern about sending ... my child, and our children into these schools.*

COVID-19 has exacerbated racial inequities for communities of color, particularly the Black community. Black families and community leaders expressed many concerns about their **children's safety** given the disproportionate health impacts on their communities. In the wake of George Floyd's killing, they were also worried about their children's safety amidst racism and (in the case of the Somali community) immigration issues and Islamophobia.

### **3. Black families and community leaders called for SPS to share resources and partner with the Black community to provide culturally responsive outreach and learning for Black children and families.**

The State of the Black Student Genius event in July 2020 called out the brilliance and genius of Black children, and the need for the district to share resources and partner with the community in this moment of crisis. At this event, students, families, and community partners shared stories of their experiences of COVID-19 and spoke to the needs of the Black community. They discussed how district efforts to educate Black children have been inadequate and argued that centering the **brilliance and genius of Black children** requires leadership and support from the community. They asked for funds to be reallocated to already formed Black educational institutes. One community member remarked, *"parents were teaching the kids but all the resources were still going to the schools."* They shared that the community already has resources and expertise available, e.g. a mental health center, a mentoring and counselor training center, Africa Town, African studies curriculum, and church facilities that would benefit from these funds to provide culturally responsive outreach and learning to Black children and families. Community leaders also discussed the need for the district to reach African American seniors who were to graduate that spring and expressed concerns over the district's inability to reach and locate a large number of them across the system. They called for the district to share resources with them to enable them to do outreach and support. Another specific issue from this community context was a question about plans for investing resources to return to in-person instruction rather than investing in improving remote instruction.

### **4. Despite the challenges, African American families fostered home learning driven by their children's interests.**

Though spring remote instruction was enormously challenging for many, Black families intentionally provided learning experiences that were challenging and driven by their children's interests.

African American families shared that they had been compensating for lack of school support long before remote schooling. Some African American families reported that prior to the pandemic, they were already providing instruction at home for their Black boys because the school system was not adequately supporting them. This lack of support was heightened

during the pandemic. According to the May SPS Remote Learning survey, Black or African American families spent significantly more time attending to their children's learning activities when compared to white families during remote learning – 50% of Black or African American families reported spending most or all of the day supporting their student's learning while 36% of white family respondents reported doing the same. One African American family with a son in the fifth grade shared:

*The experience was frustrating definitely with myself and my husband being home and having full time jobs...In a lot of ways...we were already doing...homeschooling, because for a long time [my son] wasn't getting what he needed from Seattle Public Schools. He wasn't being challenged. He just wasn't getting what he needed. And so we took it upon ourselves as his parents to make sure that we picked up workbooks, and we did all these different kinds of things to really enrich his learning because he wasn't getting that in the classroom.*

During the spring, families built upon what they were already doing at home to foster and expand teaching and learning experiences for their children. In particular, they supported their children in **learning** driven by their child's unique interests and strengths:

*We had some science kits donated to us. And they're like, hands on where you build things and he's loving that, so I'm kind of just explor[ing] new things with him. We always did little homeschooling things, but they were based off of books that you buy and not so much as ...experience things, so now we want him to have more of an experience, and [have] him tell us the things that he's enjoying and build a curriculum based around that.*

Families also intentionally fostered **learning outside of school** academics. One African American mother said her boy was enjoying hands-on work experience joining his father at work. Some families also engaged their sons in learning about activism and organizing, participating in rallies and marches, cooking, and starting book groups. For instance, a parent shared that her son had had the opportunity to join his family in intergenerational protests:

*I will say that [my son] has definitely been learning more about activism and organizing, since the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. He's actually been involved in some of the rallies and marches. And so, and he actually comes . . . from a family of activists.*

Somali families shared that remote learning has given them the opportunity to spend more time with their children. They reported getting to know their children better. They engaged in activities together, such as cooking. Their home was a dual language learning environment – their children were speaking their language at home more, and the parents were learning

English from their children. Somali families reported that their children were also learning the Koran online. These opportunities helped bring them closer together.

## SHARED FINDINGS ACROSS BLACK FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES AS WELL AS EDUCATORS

### 5. Black families, Black community leaders & educators prioritized student well-being in learning.

African American families, community leaders, Somali families and educators emphasized the need to attend to their students' **"whole well-rounded"** learning. They expressed concern over their children's **mental/psychological well-being** during this difficult time and indicated the need to include social emotional support as part of the school's teaching and learning curriculum. Somali families shared that a majority of them escaped from war, and the pandemic has been "déjà vu" for them. Although Somali families are very resilient, the pandemic has "hit home" in a "survival way." The SPS Remote Learning survey showed that 74% of Black or African American families who responded expressed concern about the social emotional health of their children; 12% of those families reported that they were "extremely concerned" -- much higher than the overall average of 6% and 5% for white respondents. One African American family indicated:

*[W]e need some psychotherapy for our children. That needs to be a part of [the] curriculum...we need something. I don't know what it is, but it needs to happen because my prayers, and my lectures, and my moments with my child, I don't feel that it's enough.*

Educators from the culturally responsive leadership cadre expressed that academic learning would be challenging if students' social emotional needs are not met. Black families are also prioritizing the continued development of their child's "soft skills," such as caring for others and taking responsibility for their community. Black community leaders also expressed the need to address the mental well-being of students. One member expressed the need for more school counselors in the nation and that there are already resources, e.g. a mental health center and other resources in the community that provide training and support to counselors. Another member started a mental health center as a means towards addressing the school-to-prison pipeline.

### 6. Families and educators expressed concern about the district's ability to meet the needs of specialized populations.

Somali families, African American families, and educators from both surveys were concerned about the district's ability to meet the needs of **students with disabilities** or other specialized needs, given a standardized curriculum and the "rigidity" of approaches they experienced. One African American family shared, *"I have a child with special needs. There's nowhere on the IEP*

*that deals or discusses about COVID learning, adapting, nothing.” A Somali family shared, “My child will not be participating online at all. She requires full one-on-one support.”*

Somali families reported feeling disconnected from schools during remote learning. Instructional assistants (IAs) were important **points of connections** in schools for them prior to COVID-19, but Somali families did not know how to access them during remote learning. Some families also reported missing schools as places of connection, specifically the South Shore parent room, where they had coffee chats and Somali tea.

The challenges of **language access** for Somali families worsened during remote learning. Families were reliant on their children to relay messages to them as educators oftentimes preferred to communicate with their children and not to them. Most families reported that they did not have relationships with teachers prior to COVID-19 and that continued during the pandemic. One family reported not hearing from the child’s teacher at all during remote learning in the spring. However, Somali families also recognized that teachers were overwhelmed and were appreciative of their efforts. Out of the 45 Somali families, the 15 who were connected with their children’s teachers prior to the pandemic felt that those connections had continued during remote learning; 3-4 of the 19 schools stood out for their priority on relationships with families.

Some Somali families also felt that the academic rigor was too low for their children even prior to the pandemic, and they were concerned about the school’s ability to meet their children’s academic needs during remote learning. They asked for assessment of their children’s academic levels and for instruction to be provided at that level. They also requested translation of materials, culturally appropriate family support specialists/social workers, bilingual instructional assistants, and more frequent communication from teachers and school administrators.

### **7. Black families and educators were frustrated by technical issues and disorganization within the system.**

Somali families, African American families, and educators from both surveys reported confusion and frustration with the system—particularly issues related to technology and the myriad of online platforms they had to navigate. One Somali family shared:

*I never have utilized a computer. I don’t know what my kids are doing online. I’m really blindfolded. I don’t have any training. I feel like my kids were already behind when it comes to education, and now I’m afraid for their future.*

Somali families specifically requested a parent orientation on how to navigate the various online platforms, access to high quality devices, internet connection, and supplies such as textbooks.

## FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO EDUCATORS

While educators reported unprecedented challenges with the sudden shift to remote learning as well, they nevertheless worked to adapt their teaching to become culturally responsive and justice-focused in this new context. The findings below describe practices educators undertook during the spring, while others were desired practices that were in process or had yet to be implemented.

### **8. Educators emphasized the need to partner with families in remote teaching.**

*"We need to honor families as their first teacher."* Educator responses from the culturally responsive leadership cadre and the Professional Growth and Evaluation Support (PGES) survey indicated that building partnerships and understanding the unique needs of families are integral to providing instruction during this time. Respondents from the culturally responsive leadership cadre indicated working with parents is the first step to engaging with students. Educators must first ask families what they need and the best ways to support them. They indicated that educators need to be flexible and responsive to each family's situation. Some educators were accommodating with how and when their lessons were provided. Some ensured families had access to them. One educator shared: *"I needed to work with each student's family on what was best for them and what they needed for their child to learn. I started one family at a time by calling them to ask what they needed."* They indicated that personal contact is essential to building trust and partnership, and ongoing, consistent communication through texting or calling were more effective than emails.

### **9. Educators prioritized positive student-adult relationships.**

*"I think students need to hear and see that we care for them first as human beings."* Some educators from the culturally responsive leadership cadre were intentional in fostering positive relationships with students and emphasized the need to be understanding and flexible. They reached out to students through multiple modes – texts, phone calls, and messaging apps – to better understand their needs. Additionally, some educators from the culturally responsive leadership cadre reported one-on-one time was effective for relationship building and engagement with students.

*Having one on one conversations with students of color and having a chance to validate them specifically for their work has been a positive experience.*

They met with their students individually during office hours while others contacted some of their students daily, particularly students with special needs.

### **10. Educators sought to enact student-centered and culturally responsive teaching.**

Educator responses from both surveys indicated that some ensured that content was relevant and current by connecting instruction to COVID-19, systemic racism and antiracist action. Moreover, some educators from the culturally responsive leadership cadre expressed that students should have a voice in deciding what remote instruction looks like for them. They tailored instruction to students' learning needs, interests, and used multiple pathways to deliver instruction. *"I have based lessons on current events, incorporating a racial justice lens and the students who have engaged have appreciated it."* Educator responses to the PGES survey indicated that they used data and analytics to capture the voice and engagement of students and families, including interviews, conversations, surveys and analytic tools of the online platforms to inform practices.

Over the course of the 2019-2020 school year, educator responses to the PGES close-ended survey items of culturally responsive teaching indicated that relative to their perspectives on culturally responsive teaching, some practices were enacted to a greater extent than others (see Appendix D for bar chart). They included: facilitating collaboration and teamwork between students; acknowledging the value when students bring their cultural skills and experiences to the classroom; and critically assessing how race may shape their interpretations of student misbehaviors. In contrast, teachers reported a lesser extent of the following practices: regularly asking students for feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction, collaborating with parents and families to inform their instruction, and analyzing disaggregated student data to inform their instruction. Compared to white teachers, teachers of color reported a greater extent of asking students for feedback, using students' cultural backgrounds and experiences to explain concepts and content, facilitating discussions of racial and social equity issues in classrooms, developing classroom routines and rituals in collaboration with students, and disaggregating student data to inform instruction."

### **11. Educators emphasized collaboration with colleagues to engage students and families furthest from educational justice.**

Educator responses from the PGES survey indicated that some worked closely with their colleagues, including instructional assistants, administrators, counselors and school interventionists to support students and families. Some educators reported collaborating closely with English language learner (ELL) instructional assistants to connect with ELL students. Educators also reported partnering with special education and ELL teachers to modify or supplement instruction for struggling students.

## **HOW THE DATA INFORMED PLANNING**

Results of the data collected from Black Families and educators were shared with the district's Remote Learning Playbook Steering Committee, a group charged with developing a district

plan for remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year. The Committee reviewed and used the data to inform the plan and recommended practices in the Playbook. In this way, the collection and use of data was intended to be immediately actionable for developing district systems and practices to improve racial equity under the COVID-19 closure. The SPS Research and Evaluation Department, which participates actively in the UW-SPS-SEA Racial Equity RPP, has also initiated efforts to support more culturally responsive data collection methods with BIPOC families and communities and recently produced a [research brief](#) with recommendations for improving future family climate surveys based on several case studies.<sup>12</sup>

Researchers have worked closely with district decision makers and program managers about the implications of the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) findings on district strategies. Because of the trust built in this RPP, researchers have been invited to key decision-making meetings at the district, such as culturally responsive teacher workforce workgroup meetings, PGES committee meetings, and other internal strategic planning meetings for human resources management initiatives. Moreover, the survey instrument developed on CRT practices will be further refined. We will continue data collection in the spring of 2021 to examine longitudinally the change of instructional practices before, during and after pandemic.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Our findings illuminate a subset of Black family and community priorities and experiences as well as educator practices during the pandemic, suggesting approaches to better meet the needs of youth and families disproportionately harmed by the system. These inquiries were early attempts to center racial equity in data collection to inform deliberations on providing remote instruction, and the RPP recognizes that these inquiries were limited in scope and sample. While the data cannot be generalized to all Black families or all educators, this was an opportunity to understand the experiences of SPS families and educators within their specific contexts and to offer a way forward as SPS deliberates its next steps. As SPS works to embed racial equity across the system, these efforts suggest further inquiry into anti-racist and culturally responsive partnerships with families, communities and educators.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Prioritize and invest resources to address the specific concerns, insights and expertise of Black families and communities** (with particular attention to those marginalized in multiple ways, such as students with disabilities). Student safety and wellbeing should be foremost. District and community leaders should partner to ensure Black (and other BIPOC) students and families can meaningfully influence *decisions* about reopening schools and post-pandemic learning *prior* to plans being finalized. Decision-making processes should be transparent to show how data and input from BIPOC families will be used, how resources are allocated, and how decisions are accountable to communities.
- 2. Innovate with community-specific data collection methods and data use to advance racial equity across the district.** Because conventional methods of data collection systematically marginalize many BIPOC students and families, the efforts in this report highlight alternative methods that specifically aim to understand the priorities and experiences of those farthest from educational justice: learning circles in partnership with Black and BIPOC-led community-based organizations (with multiple collective engagements for accountability); tapping pre-existing community-specific communication networks in home languages (like WhatsApp networks); partnering with and following the lead of trusted Black parent and community leaders; community spaces that systems leaders are invited to but do not shape or own; and equity-focused questions and analyses of surveys (such as staff surveys about culturally responsive practices disaggregated by educator race). The *use* of such data is crucial; collecting data from Black families but not using it exacerbates racial inequities and mistrust. The district should also invest time and resources into developing *critical racial data literacies*<sup>13</sup> to enable administrators and educators to meaningfully use data in racial justice-focused decision-making and ongoing follow-up with families and communities.
- 3. As schools reopen and teachers assess learning, resource and build from home and community learning to address Black student interests and needs through more culturally responsive instruction.** Instead of assessing “learning loss,” assess “learning found.” Whether remote or in-person, cultural responsiveness in teaching should begin with relationships and *learning* from students and families impacted by educational injustice about what they are already doing at home and in their communities. For instance, teachers might build from family activism during the uprising for Black lives, pandemic life, cooking activities, family outdoor walks, or other child interests to motivate and differentiate learning activities. Support educators and administrators in

undertaking culturally responsive inquiry as a *routine* professional practice, while being mindful of the extra burden and labor that educators may place on families.

4. **Build alignment and collaboration across initiatives and departments to share BIPOC student and family experiential data.** During such extraordinary uncertainty, building collaboration and alignment across district initiatives has become increasingly consequential for students, families and schools. For example, to build teachers' capacity to engage families and provide culturally responsive online teaching, DREA's racial equity teams could align with HR's training for teachers, teacher leaders, and principals, as well as with schoolwide continuous improvement, Executive Director supports for principals, family and community outreach, and efforts in the African American Male Achievement Initiative. Coordination of data collection efforts on educator practice and family engagement across the district would enable different departments to leverage data collected from individual departments to inform relevant initiatives (without overtaxing particular families and communities with requests for data that they never see impact the system).
  
5. **Leverage BIPOC district and community expertise to inform district-level decision-making.** District commitments to those impacted by educational injustices can only be fulfilled with the insights and expertise of students, families and communities themselves. As the workforce of the district diversifies to better reflect the racial and cultural demographics of students and families, BIPOC educators and administrators can help broker important community relationships and understandings. If hiring from outside the district or local community, draw on community-led decision-making bodies to vet external consultants or third-party service providers for expertise in BIPOC community relations, anti-racist school management and instructional practices, and cultural responsiveness, particularly for data or services used in district decision-making.

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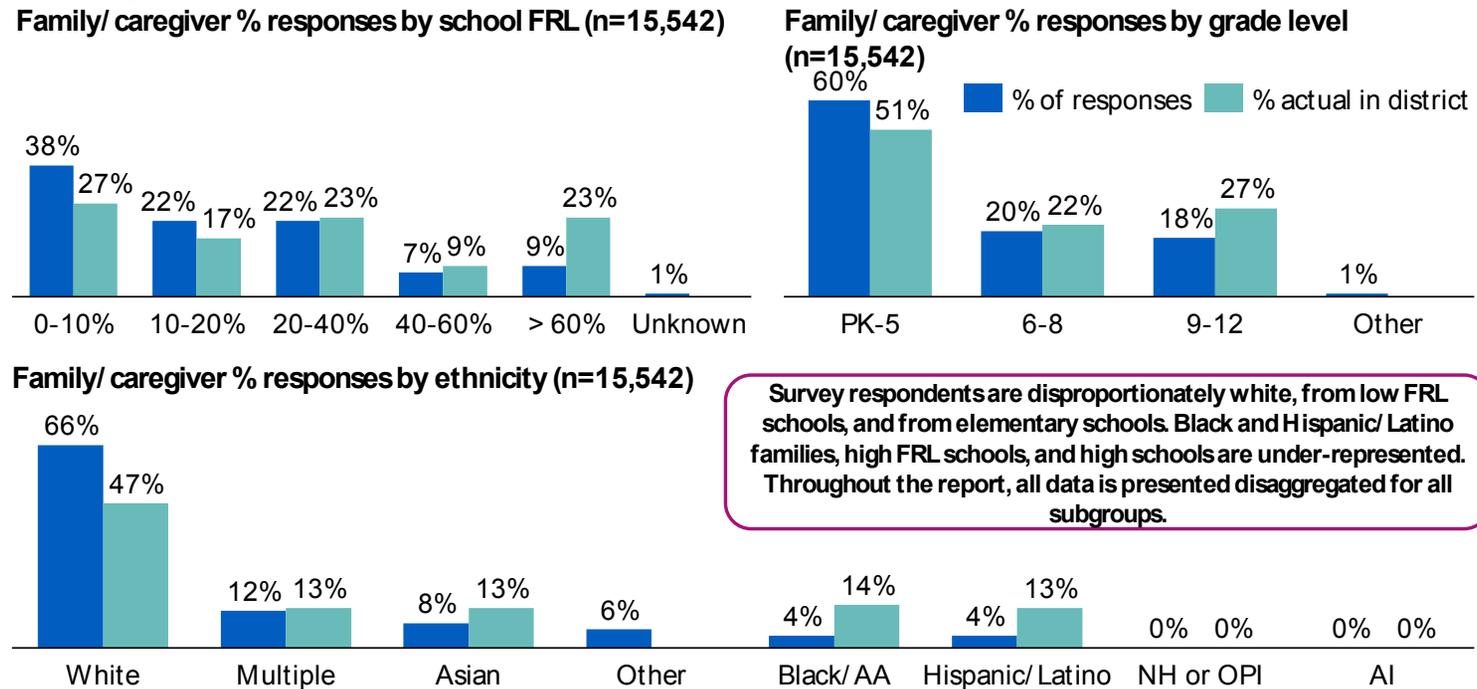
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## Appendix A: Seattle Public Schools May 2020 Remote Learning Survey Respondents

DRAFT

### Demographics of family/ caregiver survey responses versus actual demographics in the district



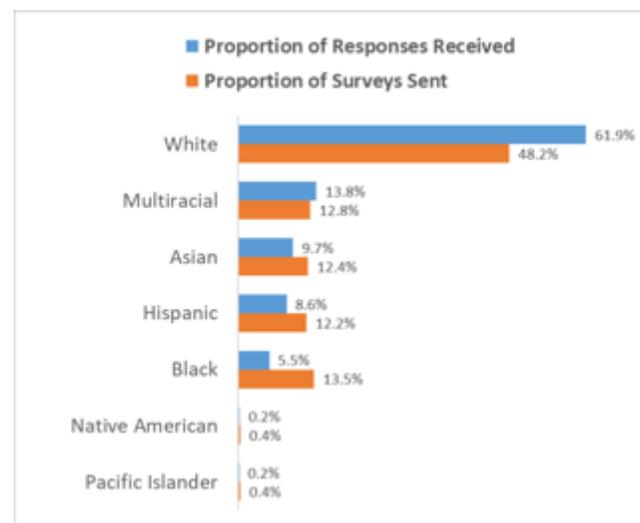
Notes: 1) FRL rates were determined based on the FRL rates of the school associated with each family/ caregiver's reported school. 2) 96 educator responses and 149 family responses selected "other" for school so they are not mapped to an FRL category or grade band. 3) families with >1 student in the district were asked to respond on behalf of one child or submit multiple surveys  
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## Seattle Public Schools December 2020 Pulse Remote Learning Survey Respondents

### Participation – Family Survey

	Student Group	Number of Responses	Number Contacted	Response Rate
	All Students	17,231	50,457	34%
Race/ Ethnicity	Asian	1,677	6,252	27%
	Black	952	6,805	14%
	Hispanic	1,485	6,151	24%
	Multiracial	2,383	6,439	37%
	Native American	41	203	20%
	Pacific Islander	29	191	15%
	White	10,661	24,329	44%
Other Key Groups	Students of Color FFEJ	3,049	16,069	19%
	African-American Male Students	490	3,442	14%
	Students Receiving SPED Services	2,518	8,020	31%
	Home Language Other Than English	1,541	8,301	19%

This table shows the proportion of students for whom at least one parent or guardian responded to the family survey. Each parent or guardian was sent one email with a survey link for each school at which they had one or more students enrolled.



Overall, 34% of students enrolled had at least one parent or guardian respond to the survey. Response rates however were significantly lower for parents or guardians of students of color furthest from educational justice (Black/African American, Hispanic/LatinX, Native American, and Pacific Islander) and students from non-English speaking families. The disproportionality between responses received and surveys sent is also displayed, showing the overrepresentation of white family responses and underrepresentation for families of color.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION



## Appendix B: Culturally-Specific Family Learning Circles Partnering for Racial Equity (PRE) Research Protocol

Learning Circles are similar to focus groups in broad structure but they differ in that they:

- position educators and researchers as *learners* who gain knowledge, insights, and understandings from families;
- encourage families to engage collectively as a *circle with* each other to share their stories and experiences and surface possible solutions together;
- rely on the expertise and relational networks of community leaders to cultivate a *culturally-specific* community-centered space that intentionally avoids school-centric, white-dominant agendas, framings, and expectations.

Learning Circles also position hosts as *answerable* to the families who share their experiences:

- Systems actors have a responsibility to honor the voices of those in the circle by checking interpretations, sharing & using their data responsibly to improve systems, and being accountable to families for those efforts.
- Hosts explicitly describe how they will take up action based on what they learned, report back on their actions & changes, and provide opportunities for future participation.
- Learning circles are not participatory design circles; formal decision-makers typically interpret and determine data use, and families are not part of decision-making.

### Planning

1. Write out the *purpose* of the focus group, proposed structure/logistics, the rationale for the particular community you seek to learn from and *what you will do* with the data and learning (note: listening is not sufficient).
  1. Plan to hold *at least* two sessions. The second session is for accountability purposes so that families have an opportunity to hear about what was done with the data, offer new insights or feedback and explore future participation.
  2. Plan to pay both the CBO and families stipends for their participation.
2. Draft initial questions
  1. Script the opening and introductions to enable families to begin by sharing the brilliance of their children
  2. Draft few, open-ended questions that begin with family priorities and experiences - do not solely ask questions about "needs" -- also ask what they are already doing and what they already have.
  3. Invite families to be frank about their experiences and explicitly recognize that racism & oppression exist in schools (avoiding asking about race/racism signals it is not ok to talk about it)
3. Partner with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
  1. Identify CBOs that have existing relationships with particular groups of parents and families.
  2. Discuss with CBO leader(s) the purpose and proposed structure.
  3. Send proposed questions for feedback & improvement.
  4. The CBO leader(s) invite(s) the families and determines scheduling & recording options so it works best for the families (e.g., some will not want to be video recorded, others may not want to be electronically recorded at all).

5. The CBO leader(s) determine(s) whether families should be encouraged to include their children or other adults in the session. They can also determine whether to send informed consent forms and a summary document ahead to participants.

### **During the Learning Circle**

- A. The CBO leader(s) welcome(s) everyone and facilitates the entire discussion.
- B. Opening & Introductions:
  1. Each person helping to host (SPS leader, CBO leader(s), university researcher) introduces themselves, with the institutional representatives, in particular, owning shortcomings of prior engagement or data collection efforts.
    1. For example, in the FOCS learning circle, the SPS leader acknowledged that the district has not done well in listening and learning, especially from Black families. He named his role as rebuilding and restoring trust and situated the learning circle as one small effort towards that end. He also acknowledged that his words alone were insufficient; the district would have to prove those commitments through its subsequent actions.
  2. CBO leader(s) shares purpose of Learning Circles & how the data will be used, leaves space for any questions from families
  3. Informed Consent & Recording: Turn on recording after each family member consents to being recorded (audio and/or video).
  4. Beyond research considerations, the CBO leader(s) asks that families maintain confidentiality of the group to hold space for each other collectively.
- C. CBO leader(s) asks questions as they see fit & invites families into conversation (with FOCS, the leader also puts the questions in the chat for people to be able to read).
 

--> This is NOT a time for educators or researchers to respond
- D. Adhere to the timeline and ask for permission to extend the session if it goes over (as CBO leader(s) determines).
  - E. End by thanking participants, reiterating followup to expect, and explicitly addressing the importance of what families shared.

### **Follow-up after the Circle**

- A. Clean the transcript to ensure it accurately captures what people said
- B. Engage multiple people in analyzing and making sense of the data, including community leaders, if possible
- C. Send a summary to the CBO leader(s) and families drawing directly from their words. Seek feedback to ensure that families feel that they are being accurately represented.
- D. Follow through on using the data to inform deliberations/decisions
- E. Get feedback from CBO leader(s) about the first circle and plan for the next session

## Learning Circle Questions

### Brief INTRO:

- Welcome & purpose of conversation & overview of logistics:
  - These circles are part of a broader effort by district – in partnership w/CBOs, UW, union – to improve how we listen to and are influenced by voices & priorities of Black families;
  - *Very* brief intro of those facilitating/supporting;
  - You are the experts on the well-being of your families and communities – gratitude for your time, experiences and expertise;
  - This is the first of 2 conversations – we hope you will be frank. Second conversation is part of how we want to be accountable for what you share with us today – we will share how your insights and priorities shaped the conversation and plans.
- Obtain informed consent – ask for verbal consent, we will follow up with signed paperwork via mail when we send stipends. We will only audio record, all names will be kept confidential. Ask them to maintain confidentiality within the group as well.
- Intros of families (for e.g., names, ages of kids, school(s)/time in district, share 1 amazing thing about their child/children).

### 1: Reopening & Digital Learning

- a. How did you experience the remote learning with SPS this spring?
- b. Outside the learning your child(ren) were doing for school, **how else has your family been learning** in the last few months? [[Examples if wanted: Learning to cook, talking about BLM or organizing, neighborhood walks, sharing stories, learning to care for siblings/elders, etc.]]
- c. What are your **priorities** for your child's learning this coming year?
- d. The district is planning on two different scenarios for reopening in the fall:

• *100% online option*

• *Hybrid model, part-time in-person instruction and part-time remote learning*

1. Which of these options are you leaning towards? 100% online or Hybrid (part time in person and part time remote)
2. Do you feel like it is safe for your student(s) to return to school physically Fall 2020? [Yes or No]

3. Given the current circumstances, what would a good school experience look like for your child(ren)? What other options or solutions would work for your family?

## **2: Experiences with schooling as Black families**

Thinking back to what schooling was like for you/your family earlier in the year BEFORE the pandemic (and past academic years):

- What challenges/issues did you experience, especially as families of Black boys in SPS?
- What was going well for your family (that you liked about how school was going)?
- Is there a particular moment or experience that stands out for you? If you could change that, what would have happened differently?

### Closing

- Is there anything we didn't get to talk about that you want to say?
- Thank you for talking with us – info about 2<sup>nd</sup> session, follow-up, etc.

## Families of Color Seattle (FOCS) African American Family Focus Group Summary

July 15, 2020

Conducted in partnership with FOCS, SPS, & UW

Partnership for Racial Equity (PRE)

(7 parents/grandparents with ED of FOCS (also a Black SPS parent))

### 1. Multigenerational African American families were already fostering their children's teaching and learning to compensate for the lack of support they received at school; they expanded those efforts during COVID and the BLM racial reckonings.

Some African American families expressed that they were already doing work at home to foster learning for their Black boys (and other children) because the system was not supporting them adequately prior to COVID. The remote learning in the spring exacerbated those challenges and for some, *"it kind of was like being online - we had to. . . do it [the struggles] all over again."*

*"We were already doing, if you will, homeschooling, because for a long time [my son] wasn't getting what he needed from Seattle Public Schools. He wasn't being challenged...He just wasn't getting what he needed. And so we took it upon ourselves as his parents to make sure that we picked up workbooks, and we did all these different kinds of things to really enrich his learning because he wasn't getting that in the classroom. So in some ways we had already had experience with sort of doing that at home but it was weird; it was frustrating. (Lines 258, 265)*

*"And his needs [are] not going to be met, but I'm with the other parent that we have always been doing extra for him to make his progress a lot better. But what does this look like for the fall? What does it look like for parents that don't know how to do this type of work...? My grandson's going into high school and you know, this is - this is a lot, you know, so the frustration part is that all the teachers are not on the same page." (Line 296)*

During this time, families built on what they *already* did at home and expanded ongoing learning experiences for their children.

*"I will say that [my son] has definitely been learning more about activism and organizing, since the murder of George Floyd and Brianna Taylor. He's actually been involved in some of the rallies and marches. And so, and he actually comes, you know, he comes from a family of activists."(Line 322)*

*"We have been very active with Black Lives Matter and our community." (Line 334)*

*My son has been doing like a book group with his dad so far, they've read Animal Farm together and they also read the autobiography of Frederick Douglass as well, and they're also learning French together through Babel. (Line 338)*

*And he's also learning how to play the keyboard, so he got a keyboard from one of his aunties for his birthday last year, so we've been using an app for him to learn how to to play music on that. And he's been helping out with cooking as well. (Line 342)*

*There is a curriculum through Seattle opera that my kids have kind of, it's an education curriculum tapped into for music. . . (Line 357)*

*Racial, the racial talks, even with my six year old have begun because of, you know, just having to share with my children what's going on in the world, why we need to be precautious, why all of these things and so the Sesame Street Covid they were having those. They had one for Covid, and then they had one, a town hall for like racial tension, I think, you know, all of these things are helping because we are in the house, and there's just a lot to do, and so much to do so yeah, that's our spiel. (Line 360)*

**2. Families facilitated child-directed learning at home driven by their unique interests and strengths; they particularly expressed concern about the district's ability to meet their children's needs.**

*"She's like scientists walking around the halls looking to see what can I build from that like, just the, you know, some wanting them to really hone those skills and needing to, or driving themselves to do these different things, so being creative. (Line 406)*

*"Now we want him to have more of an experience, and him tell us the things that he's enjoying and build a curriculum based around that. (Line 392)"*

*"But for them having that, like -- you must explain this thing in this one particular way -- was really hard. And so I think in these covid times, it would be great if teachers could acknowledge the difference in learning approaches. So instead of here's the goal; here's the end goal. But you can do that in many different ways. So, my son does not love writing papers. Yes, he's going to do it. But if he could get to the same goal by doing an intro video which he loves. He's been learning how to make video, do different things like different formats. I think being mindful of different ways of learning, different approaches to learning that inspires creativity and encourages individuality, then that feeds into, because it was a lot of stress of like, you have to do this project this way. He's like, I want to do it a different way. So I think that would really help with that mental health piece of it all is if the teachers can recognize a variety of learning modes and approaches to get to the same [goal]." (Lines 505-509)*

Families were particularly concerned about the district's ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities or other specialized needs, given a standardized curriculum and the "rigidity" of approaches they experienced this past spring:

*"But my main concern was, how is the curriculum going to be adaptable to those children with special needs IEPs those who are highly capable, those who are advanced learners, because the general program that they had was just the kids sit in front of a computer for one hour in general setting." Line 276*

*"I have a child with special needs. There's nowhere on the IEP that deals or discusses about Covid learning, adapting, nothing." Line 244*

*"But I have some questions and it's like the IEP team, they're on vacation, and I really feel that the school district needs to figure out a way to make it all work at all times." Line 254*

*One of the things that I would like to see is for the parents who have children on IEPs, or who have a specialty programs, if they could incorporate that in their home care if we're not integrating back into the school. Because I think that's a lot of the concern that we have is that a good school to parents would be that that child would not lack those services, just because they're not in the school program And I mean that for those who are special needs, highly capable advanced because in all the in between, I just want to make sure that the children are not lacking because of remote learning or not lacking because of the social circumstances that are going on around us and that they're not missing out on their educational needs because of it. That would be a good school experience and that they also can get some kind of interaction like some virtual field trips seeing things that is not just their home and their teacher. (Lines 476-479)*

### **3. Beyond the technical, communication, and organizational challenges, families had experiences of remote learning that varied by teachers, school, and child; all shared longstanding and ongoing racialized tensions with schools.**

- Differing experiences of remote learning related to different teacher practices, adult presence, and children's ages:

*"One of his teachers was amazing. She was a Spanish teacher. She had a set time every day and I was able to sit in and watch them do the Spanish. She had three different time. She had like 11 to 12 or she had 1 to 2, and she had from 6 to 7 so then that way parents can be a part of it if they want to, but the other teachers didn't do that." (High School Family, Line 300)*

*"[O]ne thing that's frustrating to me is the online program focuses on the child being able to be self disciplined to do the remote learning and that's expecting the parents to not be able to work to be sure the children are sitting there in front of the computer doing that self discipline work." (Elementary School Family, Line 270)*

- Families felt they were constantly dealing with ongoing racialized expectations and assumptions of teachers and the system

*"[Teachers should] not just [tell my child], 'oh, you're good, you're good where you are.' No, we're pushing them to strive and so like I said, that expression has always stuck with me, the soft bigotry of low expectations." (Line 523)*

*"[My son] at least academically was not getting what he needed from Seattle Public Schools and there were a lot of very traumatic frustrating conversations with school administrators and principals and teachers around this and the soft bigotry of low expectations. Even though you know he's testing off the hook, and he's doing this, and he's doing that, you're still, you know, telling us that our kid is not capable of doing this work." (Line 536)*

*"I'm tired of teachers looking at our brown kids, kids of color when they are expressing themselves, that they have a behavior issue. And so I had met with the teachers, the principal and says, 'Listen, my child does not have a behavior issue.' Maybe the teacher needs the educator stuff and how to deal with kids [who] have different needs. . . They don't want to learn what's going on with the child. My grandson had experienced several losses in his life with his, you know, grandfather, brother dying and all these things and ... he was experiencing some things, and I would let them know this. But in the back of their mind, oh, this child has a behavior issue...And I just think we need to be more educated on our kids of color." (Lines 551-555)*

*"I noticed you know they have a Black Lives Matter training...I just think that, you know, for children on the special education spectrum, it'd be nice if these teachers coming in to the school district can already have these trainings. (Line 570)*

- 4. Families in the focus group prioritize their children's "whole well-rounded" learning,** including engaging them in reading, math, and music; tending to their children's mental/psychological wellbeing; and continuing to develop "soft skills," such as caring for others and taking responsibility for community.

*"My priority is ensuring that my kids are on track and ahead of the game academically but I also want to make sure, psych is my background, and so I want to make sure that they have those soft skills, caring for others, sense of community, taking initiative. (Lines 404-406)*

*"[W]e need some psychotherapy for our children. That needs to be a part of curriculum...we need something. I don't know what it is, but it needs to happen because my prayers, and my lectures, and my moments with my child, I don't feel that it's enough. And I'm not going to sit here and say, oh, I want to put it on the school district. No, I mean if the school district is really about learning and knowing our children and wanting to enforce a whole well rounded being then, surely, we can all agree, thank you." (Lines 494-496)*

**5. African American families appreciated help with laptop access but felt frustrated by internet and other online platform issues, communication, and lack of educator consistency/organization.**

Families acknowledged that the district is doing its best given challenging circumstances and offered recommendations for improving communication and organization:

- Ensure everyone has access to laptops and sufficient internet.

*"[I am] a proud single mother of two children. . . So for me it was, it was just crazy as a full time working parent and then having to remote work from home. And to be honest, we didn't have any personal laptops or computers, and so being on the PTA I have a good relationship with my children's principal and, it was one of those things where it was just ugly. I wasn't ashamed to cry out for help. I wasn't ashamed to say, we need, do you have any computers locked in the janitor's closet that we can have?" [Line 244]*

*"My husband has been at home and houseguests at the time all trying to use one internet, you know, service provider." (Line 275)*

- Reach out to families through phone or text, *not* emails.

*"[W]hat I would like to propose and I don't know if the district is set up to do this or if they can find someone to do this but I know that if they can reach out to parents through the, through the phone and ask questions via text and have people answer that way, that may be a better way to reach families is through text and not email." (Line 589)*

- Ensure consistency and organization of teaching platforms, approaches, and scheduling within and across schools.

*"In middle school and all six teachers use six different methods, six different programs so we were logging into six different things at different times and it was just like, okay could you all put it on one calendar so that we look here, and initially I was getting frustrated with him because I'm like you're just not looking. And then when I got on a mic. Oh yeah, I know I'm a grown person and I still cannot find all of this stuff, so just the disorganization despite the kid." (Line 285)*

*"I have a kid in middle school and then one in elementary and then there were issues where they had meetings at the same time so needing the computer at the same time, you know. So just some organizational pieces would have been helpful I think along the way." (Line 288)*

## Appendix C: Culturally Responsive Leadership Cadre Survey Themes

### Foundational Principles for Culturally Responsive Remote Learning Themes from Survey of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Leadership Group

Research partnership effort between Seattle Public Schools,  
Seattle Education Association Center for Racial Equity,  
and University of Washington College of Education

#### Background

Efforts are currently underway in Seattle Public Schools to develop a plan for instruction next year that encompasses a vision for a more robust and purposeful approach to remote learning. To help ensure that plans are developed with a clear focus on racial equity, a **targeted survey** was sent to educators who have been working intensively in recent years to develop and advance racially equitable and culturally responsive teaching practices. The purpose of the targeted survey was to gather insights from experienced educators who are best positioned to provide insights about the experience of remote learning by students and families of color furthest from educational justice – i.e., what has worked to engage and serve them, and what lessons have been learned that can inform planning efforts plans to improve remote learning.

This document summarizes themes from educators’ written responses to four open-response questions included in the June 2020 targeted survey. Themes are organized as “Foundational Principles for Culturally Responsive Remote Learning,” and sample quotes written by survey respondents included for illustration. SPS educators invited to respond included members of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Leadership group, as well as Racial Equity Team (RET) school leads and Ethnic Studies coaches. A total of 40 educators responded to the survey.

#### Survey Themes with Illustrative Quotes

##### 1. Authentic family engagement and partnership is essential for remote learning to be successful for students furthest from educational justice.

Illustrative Quotes:

- We need to honor families as their first teacher.
- Getting parents on board is the first step to engaging students.
- There needs to be a clear expectation that family communication is key – that all families must be reached out to regularly. The time that takes must be honored and accounted for.
- Creating partnerships with home is vital... Having a growth mindset and asset-based mindset when working with families, especially those furthest from educational justice.

##### 1.A. Effective family engagement requires personal contact to build trust

Illustrative Quotes:

- Personal contact with families to build trust and partnership is essential.
- Families want to work with school. They want to know we care.
- They respond to us showing up over and over; trust grows. They see we are dedicated and will do what it takes.
- It's too easy to assume that lack of engagement signals lack of caring... if you show how much you care...you'll be surprised what you learn.

- o *It helps to build family relationships when you ask parents what their goals are for their students, instead of making them think you know everything.*

**1.B. Multiple modes of communication are critical to engage diverse families**

Illustrative Quotes:

- o *Phone calls and texts are better than emails*
- o *It's important to use multiple media—text, phone, remind, e-mail*
- o *Using text message in multiple languages and keep the message succinct is the key*
- o *Texting is huge. Some teachers don't want to use cell phones but having a way to do that is critical.*
- o *We must "get proximate" in any and every way we can. Call, text, home visits, email, surveys, School Messenger - do not be afraid to use them all to ensure voices are heard and needs are met.*

**1.C. Support families in creating a learning environment at home**

Illustrative Quotes:

- o *In some homes, there just aren't quiet spaces due to size of family and home.*
- o *You must engage parents and guardians first and help them set up guidelines (for remote learning).*
- o *Scholars need a quiet area to work*
- o *Helping to ensure the students have a space and technology to work at home. Checking to see if they are needed to help take care of other siblings.*

**1.D. Educators should be flexible and responsive to each family situation**

Illustrative Quotes:

- o *Being flexible about how and when lessons are provided and rescheduling as needed for families*
- o *I needed to work with each student's family on what was best for them and what they needed for their child to learn. I started one family at a time by calling them to ask what they needed*
- o *What's been effective is working with the family's schedules to get hours that work for them...*
- o *I found it very important to be flexible with my communication and my accessibility*
- o *We are going into family's homes with remote learning and we shouldn't be telling them what to do. To engage them we need to ask them, what can I do to support you and what is best for you?*

**2. Positive adult-student relationships are essential for remote learning to engage and support students furthest from educational justice.**

Illustrative Quotes:

- o *Remote learning is much harder. There is a huge divide, and it's hard to build relationships. Teaching is harder because attention spans are shorter, and distractions are more common.*
- o *Don't expect videos to be watched, assignments to be submitted, etc. until strong working relationships have been formed.*
- o *Culture is a major factor in the differences of learning and teachers must adjust to students and not the other way around*

**2.A. Building and maintaining relationships requires frequent personal contact**

Illustrative Quotes:

- o *Reach out every way possible until you can connect with them you find out their needs.*
- o *The students that I have been able to text with individually, talk with on the phone or maintain connections with via messaging have been most likely to engage.*
- o *The emphasis needs to be on building relationships, being understanding and flexible, making learning personal*
- o *Be ok being vulnerable! Students want to feel like they can relate to you to trust you!*
- o *Don't be afraid to open up and be real so kids can relate.*

**2.B. Prioritize supporting students' social emotional needs**

*Illustrative Quotes:*

- o *Prioritizing their emotional health first. Acknowledging their stress, their fears during this moment has been paramount*
- o *I think students need to hear and see that we care for them first has human beings.*
- o *If we don't engage with students on a human level attending to their social and emotional needs, they will not engage and will not learn*
- o *We must develop a robust system and a process for assessing and supporting children's social-emotional health throughout the year*

**2.C. Student supports should be personalized with opportunities for 1:1 attention**

*Illustrative Quotes:*

- o *Giving students one on one attention has been the most productive.*
- o *Having one on one conversations with students of color and having a chance to validate them for their work has been a positive experience*
- o *Office hours need relationship building so breaking up the hour into connection time, homework help time, and then something fun helps students want to come to the office hours*

**3. Instruction must be student-centered, culturally relevant and guarantee technology access for students furthest from educational justice.**

**3.A. Make sure the technology is in place in every home, for every student**

*Illustrative Quotes:*

- o *Equitable access to technology had to be the first order of business during the school closure.*
- o *There needs to be more access to tech and how to utilize tech, that is a given.*
- o *Families need support with devices and digital platforms, not everyone has had the privilege of becoming tech savvy.*
- o *Families should never be expected to print anything out.*
- o *We need high-speed free internet access for everyone.*
- o *ASK every student if they need a laptop or internet. MAKE SURE they have it.*

**3.B. Remote learning should center student voice and student choice**

*Illustrative Quotes:*

- o *It's critical to have student voice at the table in deciding what closure school can look like for them.*
- o *Remote learning, like a classroom, requires a deliberate, intentional invitation to share the space.*
- o *Make options where students can engage and participate.*
- o *We need to know what our students' responsibilities are right now and be flexible with them. Sometimes that means meeting later in the day, or accepting work in a different format*

**3.C. Culturally relevant content is essential for student engagement**

*Illustrative Quotes:*

- o *Just as in a classroom, students of color need to be able to see themselves in the curriculum.*
- o *I am learning that keeping the content as relevant and current as possible and the mode of communication as natural as possible has worked better.*
- o *Connecting to COVID, systemic racism and anti-racist action to the content has worked.*
- o *My students of color want to learn about their own history, they want help in understanding and shaping their identities.*

- *I have based on lessons on current events, incorporating a racial justice lens and the students who have engaged have appreciated it*
- *We have had read alouds about the recent protests and Black Lives Matter over Zoom. My writing assignments have revolved around anti-racist themes.*

### **Culturally Responsive Leadership Cadre Survey Questions**

1. Please describe anything you are learning about culturally responsive teaching practice and addressing racial equity issues in the context of digital/remote learning and our current instructional environment. Include any descriptions of things you are doing that seems effective.
2. Please describe anything you are learning about how to engage students of color under the current conditions. What would you like leaders and educators across our system to know or understand about racial equity issues and the implications of engaging students of color in the context of digital/remote learning? Include any descriptions of things you are doing that seems effective.
3. Please describe anything you are learning about how to engage families of color under the current conditions. What would you like leaders and educators across our system to know or understand about racial equity issues and the implications of engaging families and communities of color in the context of digital/remote learning? Include any descriptions of things you are doing that seems effective.
4. What are your key takeaways and recommendations that can inform the district's plan and future vision for racially equitable and culturally responsive digital/remote learning?

## Appendix D: 2019-2020 Professional Growth and Evaluation Support (PGES) Survey

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#### PGES Surveys on Culturally Responsive Teaching in Remote Learning Settings

Over the past three years, UW EPAL (Education Policy Analytics Lab) has been partnering with SPS HR and R&E to conduct annual surveys to all certificated teachers, principals and assistant principals about their professional growth and support. We made modifications to this year's surveys to collect information on instructional, school, and district practices that are relevant to SPS's five-year Strategic Plan. For the 2019-20 survey, we received responses from 1,716 out of 3,090 certificated teachers.

One question in the survey pertains to the extent to which teachers conducted instructional practices aligned with the tenets of culturally responsive teaching during the entire school year, through both a close-ended question and an open-ended question. About 933 certificated classroom teachers provided their responses to an open-ended question of "How have you made your practice culturally responsive in remote learning settings during the pandemic? What shifts have you made?". In this brief memo, we summarize the major themes from responses to this open-ended question. Just to note, these findings come from very preliminary analysis of the data, and more in-depth analyses will be followed later this summer.

#### Major Themes about Culturally Responsive Teaching in Remote Learning Settings



As see you in the word cloud, the significant shift of being culturally responsive was the efforts of engaging students and families in remote learning settings. To decompose this theme, we summarize seven topics:

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1. *Basic conditions for remote learning:* Satisfying the basic needs of students and families, and facilitating students' access to technology and a variety of learning materials
2. *Tailored and flexible instruction:* Tailoring for individual students' learning needs and using multiple pathways to deliver instruction to students
3. *Interactive and engaging instruction:* Creating lessons that are more interactive and engaging, and building communities among students remotely
4. *Culturally Responsive Instruction:* Using more culturally responsive materials, pedagogies, and assessment; and using national and local events to engage students with issues of social justice and anti-racism
5. *Collaboration:* Collaboration with others, including other teachers via PLCs, with counselors, IAs (EL and Sped), admin, and parents
6. *Data-informed practices:* Using data and analytics to capture the voice and engagement of students and families, including interviews, conversations, surveys, and analytic tools of the online platforms (e.g., schoology)
7. *Centering families in supporting students' learning:* Using multiple platforms to communicate and build trust with families, students, and communities (e.g., emails, call, video conference/virtual meetings)

### **Challenges and Issues that Teachers Faced**

1. Issues evolve over the course of school closure. At the beginning, it was about devices and internet; then after students received donated equipment, the issues became how to support students and families for using the devices, and how to engage students on on-line learning platforms
2. Challenges of providing engaging learning experiences for students who receive extra supports, such as students receiving English Language Learner or Special Education services, and students of color farthest from educational justice

### **Potential Longer-term Benefits**

Quantitative data from two years of PGES surveys indicate that compared to other aspects of culturally responsive teaching, teachers, on average, have been reporting lesser degree on collaboration with parents, disaggregation of student data, and use of students' feedback to inform instruction. The remote learning and pandemic forced teachers to do more engagement with parents and students in creative ways. What teachers have been experimenting with during remote learning settings may persist or benefit student learning in the long run even after the pandemic, such as:

1. Innovations and gained skills and methods of engaging parents, students, and communities

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2. Innovations and gained skills and methods of using diverse platforms to develop engaging instruction for students
3. The use of broader curriculum materials to make student learning more diverse and culturally responsive
4. Incorporating student feedback

**Attachment: Relevant Quotes for Major Themes**

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**Relevant Quotes for Major Themes**

1. **Basic conditions for remote learning.** Satisfying the basic needs of students and families, and facilitating students' access to technology and a variety of learning materials
  - "Receiving weekly groceries and other donations so that this student can concentrate on academics and social-emotional needs with his classmates."
  - "Having minimal requirements and tons of extensions to accommodate different student needs and family situations. Making home visits to deliver supplies, food, and resources. Getting computers for students without computers."
  - "I volunteer time to make home deliveries of school materials and needed supplies."
  - "I have done my best by communicating more with parents and families, although their primary needs have been more about survival (food, rent assistance). In order to be culturally responsive, helping to fulfill these basic needs have taken precedence over learning and creativity."
  - "I have been in contact with students and their families to make sure first of all that their physical needs are met, then that their needs to access to learning are met, and continue to check in to encourage engagement."
  - "Almost all of my students are students of color who have historically been underserved and many of these students did not have access to technology resources for quite some time after school closure. I prepared paper materials specific to my critical work with them (SIPPS) and hand delivered them to their homes."
  
2. **Tailored and flexible instruction.** Tailoring for individual students' learning needs and using multiple pathways to deliver instructions to students
  - "I worked with students to help them create learning plans that work best for their individual situations. I have removed all due dates and giving of zeros for missed work. When students fall behind I have helped them to pick out which assignments to skip and which must be made up. I have offered my lessons in Zoom, as video lectures, as PowerPoints so that students can access the learning on a schedule that fits them."
  - "Having the luxury of 1:1 lessons meant students were able to have more agency and choice over how we spent our learning time together."
  - "Providing personal video lessons (shift) and article assignments that focus on ethnic contributions and protest, as well as regional impacts of events and time periods for my History class. Providing a variety of tasks that reach different learning styles: Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, reading, etc."



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- "Screencasts of simulations; screen casts of read-alouds of articles. Having directions on entry points for students who are just beginning. Providing supplemental activities that are engaging and loosely tied to current academic topic."
3. **Interactive and engaging instruction.** Creating lessons that are more interactive, engaging, and building communities among students remotely
    - "I have enjoyed greater flexibility to use materials beyond the CCC curriculum to better meet the needs of our students of color and from other cultures/languages. I have seen more engagement, ironically, via online learning than in the small group setting in the classroom because students are more engaged in the content that is of more interest to them."
    - "Making time to check in with students' social-emotional well being, provide community support"
    - "I have mostly been doing A LOT of mental health support and acquiring resources for them"
    - "Shifting toward social emotional supports through zoom meetings. Less emphasis on assessment, more on community building."
    - "I have been providing students with weekly one-on-one conferences which allows me to differentiate to their current academic needs as well as the needs of their family (e.g. access to learning materials, access to food, etc.). Through one-on-one meetings I have learned tremendous amounts about students and their families."
    - "I have created a "choose-your-own-adventure"-style Portfolio Project for students to work one-on-one with me to establish personal growth goals related to their specific interests within our subject area. This was not something I had ever done in the in-person, large class setting that I am used to teaching in."
    - "During the remote learning, my focus was to ensure students have peer to peer exchanges and small group discussions on something that's relating to their lives rather than teaching the content specifically."
  4. **Culturally responsive instruction.** Using more culturally responsive materials, pedagogies, and assessment; and using national and local events to engage students with social justice and anti-racism
    - "Using the current broader national contexts, in conjunction with local communities, to discuss racial injustice, used circle talks to let students discuss the racial injustices in our country giving every student the opportunity to speak and share."
    - "Developing norms with students, discussing issues on race still- discussing BLM, engaging others via spirit weeks and sharing BLM Book lists on Schoology."

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- "I continue to choose texts that many students of color "see themselves" in and can "teach" white students about SOC experiences. I addressed the recent killings of black people by offering safe talking circles for students to share, checking in with SOC individually and providing a survey to gather info on what background knowledge, experience my students have of current events. I also surveyed to see if they have an adult they can talk to at home and if they wanted to have another meeting together with other students to discuss. I shared "KidLit Rally 4 Black Lives" video in my schoology page for viewing and commenting on what these authors had to share with student about recent events."
  - "Shifts I made included relevant, real time content based on both pandemics: Coronavirus and Police Brutality. All lessons became centered on these two things immediately after closure."
  - "As I've realized my students lack vocabulary, I'm able to give examples from events today and the text as needed. For example, what colorblind racism is, white privilege, microaggressions, etc. I continue to give students opportunities to voice how they would like to take action following content for the week. After I review their interests on Seesaw, my second email to families in the week contains resources for families to pursue taking action aligned with their student's interests."
5. **Collaboration.** Collaboration with others, including other teachers via PLCs, with counselors, IAs (EL and SpEd), admin, and parents
    - "ELL IAs have been essential for the ELL students and families during this time. I have learned to connect students and IAs, to be in constant communication with IAs and to support IAs in any way possible in their efforts to engage students and families."
    - "Partnering with ELL and SpEd support teachers to modify or supplement assignments for struggling students."
    - "I involved administration, school counselors, school specialists (ELL/SPED), and school interventionists (math/reading) to ensure that students furthest from educational justice and other students with special needs were receiving services to ensure that their priority needs were met."
    - "Work with EL teacher several times daily, work modifications and instructions, availability of materials- frequent contact to ensure family understanding and assessing/addressing needs beyond student work"
    - "More family collaboration working with students to assess access to learning and provide school and community resources. Adapting to student learning in collaborative ways for those who are not thriving in online settings."
  6. **Data-informed practices.** Using data and analytics to capture the voice and engagement of students and families, including interviews, conversations, surveys, and analytic tools of the online platforms.

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- "I created a couple surveys to ask students what type of work would be most engaging - I did this right at the start before we were even posting lessons, and then again near the end to see what activities they would like to end with."
  - "Surveying families about resources they have or need. Surveying families about the best times and platforms for online meetings for their child."
  - "I use my Schoology analytics to target my outreach toward students/families that need it most."
  - "As a specialist teacher, I have access to analytics across the entire school and see that only a small minority of students are accessing Schoology with any regularity. Though the school/district directive was that I share learning resources--lessons, activities, etc--with students once per week via classroom teachers or Schoology, I did not feel that most students were able to access these resources. My PLC team and I have worked hard since the closure to find more effective ways of reaching students. We've collaborated with classroom teachers and other specialists to explore and implement new strategies. Including reaching out to classroom teachers to attend weekly class meetings through Teams or Zoom. I have seen many more students in attendance at these meetings than are active in Schoology. Very few students seem aware of the resources being put out by the district or that my specialist colleagues and I have shared through their teachers or Schoology. Because of these concerns, I reached out directly to students I thought might not have art supplies at home and distributed art supplies using social-distancing practices to as many families as possible."
7. **Centering families in supporting students' learning:** Using multiple platforms to communicate and build trust with families, students, and communities (e.g., emails, call, video conference/virtual meetings)
- "I have reached out to families throughout the pandemic. I offer multiple avenues to reach the learning including pre-recorded lessons, live meetings in whole group settings, live meetings in small group settings as well as delivering paper, pencils, crayons, books, games, etc. to all my students homes. I have communicated with families via email, telephone, and texts. I have also reached out and worked closely with our school's Community Engagement personnel as well as advocates in the community that work closely with some of my families, especially those living in supportive housing situations."
  - "I think building family relationships and getting to know families has been the number one priority -- really, building relationships already in place. By getting to know families more deeply, I could build trust that allowed me to communicate with them more effectively and honor their needs at this point."
  - "I was able to continue doing the following things: (1) Provide language support with extra vocabulary work bilingual instruction, e-mails, and materials. (2) Worked to call every family and get the necessary technology to them to participate. (3) Provided alternate (paper versions) for families that were not able to engage online. (4) Acknowledged that even scholars who could login would be facing parents with different abilities/time to help, that the online modality was not ideal for many scholars

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particularly those with IEPs, finding a quiet place to study might be difficult or impossible, etc. (5) Working with some families to develop their own system for engaging with math when ours was not working - alternate experiences, conversations, activities, resources, etc."

- "Maximum flexibility in regards to communication channels I us to connect with my students (email, phone, text, video chat, etc.) -- whatever is best for the student and their family. I've checked in with families regarding technology needs and other supports necessary to access remote education."

### **Challenges and Issues**

Since our survey questions did not particularly ask for challenges or issues, such feedback was relatively limited. However, certificated teachers did mention the following two themes with some degree of consistency.

1. **Issues evolved over the course of school closure. At the beginning, it was about devices and internet; then after students received donated equipment, the issues became how to support students and families for using the devices, and how to engage students on on-line learning platforms.**
  - "I don't think I have, on balance. The challenges of re-creating and maintaining a classroom culture of learning has overwhelmed my "normal" inclinations and abilities to facilitate culturally responsiveness. Very few of my students of color are participating in the video classroom meetings or completing the Schoology mediated assignments. I have called home, texted, and emailed my students, but feel like I haven't been able to get traction. I have been able to weave the current events of BLM and COVID into my social studies curriculum, but the educational experience is not longer the two-way street it used to be. There isn't the back-and-forth, give and take, breath in and breath out, anymore."
  - "Honestly, poorly compared to what we are able to do when being onsite"
  - "There has been very little engagement online, maybe 20% of students, so it has been difficult to do much teaching at all."
  - "It is different since students are more apprehensive to be open in the online classes I believe due to its newness. Getting middle school students to feel comfortable and confident online is a process in itself. They are reluctant to turn cameras on let alone have vulnerable discussions. If or when we continue with online learning we will need to do excessive community building before students will feel safe"
  - "I need to talk more with others about how remote learning impacts our ability to practice culturally responsive teaching. This has been a jarring and difficult transition in all sorts of ways so I can't claim that I've been able to focus on this as I want to. I've been focusing on making contact with students and emphasizing my care for their well-being and that of their families. I'm emphasizing both support for each other and individualization in what and how they choose to learn much of our contact. I've been encouraging students to also think and write about events happening right now, to act, if they can and to share what they are doing to engage in our democracy. I have ideas about making collaborative

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learning work better next year once students more likely have the tech they need to engage with our class....Even with all of this, it's still demoralizing how few students remain engaged in class, however, I can't know fully why this is for all students because of the challenges of communicating individually with over 100 students. So the current situation feels really terrible and disconnected from many of my students. I'm hoping to God that we can have some direct contact with students next Fall. That is an essential part of what we do and our ability to support all students' learning and well-being."

- "They received laptops from Amazon, but need instruction on basic usage. ...Not all families are yet participating and this is an area I continue to think about. How to get 100% engagement, especially if we are doing this in the fall."
  - "I'm trying. I am trying to make my remote learning more engaging and interactive, but am limited by the tools and inconsistent user experience. Some students can interact with the whiteboard in Teams and Zoom, other's can't. Some can interact with the PowerPoint, others can't."
- 2. Challenges of providing engaging learning experiences for students who are in need of support, such as ELL, Sped, and students of color furthest from educational justice.**
- "Unfortunately remote learning is inequitable and not very culturally responsive by nature. Teaching ELLs with the added difficulties of technology access, lack of opportunity for direct instruction, ability to do hands-on group projects, etc., has created great hurdles to accessibility. Screen-based classrooms, paper packet materials, and independent learning are not best practices for ELLs."
  - "The challenges of re-creating and maintaining a classroom culture of learning has overwhelmed my "normal" inclinations and abilities to facilitate culturally responsiveness. Very few of my students of color are participating in the video classroom meetings or completing the Schoology mediated assignments. I have called home, texted, and emailed my students, but feel like I haven't been able to get traction."
  - "I worked very strenuously at the beginning of the quarantine to get computers in the hands of the students that did not have one. We were very much aware of the fact that the kids in need of laptops were those who traditionally are the furthest from educational justice. We are very thankful to Amazon for donating those. However, a challenge I have found in the remote learning settings was getting those kids who needed laptops to actually turn in school work. It was all well and good to get laptops to these students, but I feel that their families were not proactive in getting their children to use them. This has left me with a quandary of what to do. I've reached out numerous times to offer support only to be ignored. I felt that we bent over backwards to solve this inequity issue only to have that effort spurned by the families who are most in need."
  - "I have been very concerned that the remote learning tools provided to us by the district have not proven effective at reaching large groups of students--particularly students of color or students who speak a

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language other than English at home. As a specialist teacher, I have access to analytics across the entire school and see that only a small minority of students are accessing Schoology with any regularity.”

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### 2019-2020 PGES Survey Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey Responses Bar Chart

